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Confirmation or Elaboration: What Do Yes/No Declaratives Want?

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ABSTRACT

Recent analyses have argued that when requests for confirmation are implemented with declarative word order, they are closure-implicative due to the relatively knowing stance indexed with the declarative. This article demonstrates, however, that in some cases participants show an orientation to both confirmation and elaboration as a relevant next action. By comparing requests for confirmation that are closure-implicative to those that are expansion-implicative, it is argued that in addition to epistemic stance, participants also orient to the lexical design features and sequential placement of these declarative yes/no-type initiating actions to determine the relevant type of response. Data are in Dutch with English translations.

Requests for information and confirmation have for a long time been a major hurdle for research dealing with the action-formation problem (Levinson, 2013; Schegloff, 2007). While a one-to-one relation between the linguistic form of an utterance and the action it implements would be highly preferable, it is clear that for information requests such a relation does not exist (Paardekooper, 1968; Sadock & Zwicky, 1985; Schegloff, 1984). In particular, while some languages like English and Dutch have an interrogative word order that is considered the prototypical format for an information request, the declarative order (or default order) is also frequently used to do inquiries (Labov, 1970; Stivers & Enfield, 2010). The response to these declarative inquiries typically consists of yes/no-type tokens, (dis)agree tokens, (partial) repetitions, or even a combination of some of these features depending on the grammar of the language (Sadock & Zwicky, 1985).

Recent work in conversation analysis has begun to address this issue. Heritage has shown in his seminal paper on the role of knowledge for interaction that when participants distinguish between actions that provide or request information, they orient primarily to their respective rights to know and talk about the information addressed: their epistemic status (Heritage, 2012). An utterance, be it interrogative or declarative, is treated as requesting information when all participants attribute epistemic primacy to the addressee. Declarative word order is used to index the speaker's epistemic stance. That is, with a declarative inquiry a speaker claims to be relatively knowledgeable about the addressed information compared to when s/he would have used an interrogative.

That is not to say that the linguistic design of a turn—e.g., morphosyntax or intonation—has no role to play in action formation. It is precisely because declaratives index a certain epistemic stance that they can be used for particular action types (Seuren, Huiskes, & Koole, 2015). In fact, both Lee (2015) for Korean and Park (2012) for English argue that declaratives, or morphosyntactically *unmarked questions*, have very different sequential implications than interrogatives, and that because of these sequential implications, interrogatives are used to launch a larger sequence, whereas

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declaratives are used to launch what Schegloff (2007, ch. 9) calls sequence-closing sequences (see also G. Raymond, 2010a).

Our aim in this article is threefold. First, we will show that while yes/no declaratives (YNDs) do indeed request confirmation, they can also create an environment in which the interlocutor can provide additional talk, and in fact when that talk is not provided, it can be pursued. Second, we will argue that YNDs that project only confirmation and YNDs that also project some form of elaboration can be distinguished based on their sequential and epistemic context. Mere confirmation is treated as the relevant response when the YND returns to a prior action, that is, requests confirmation of some belief or understanding that has already been established or made highly salient earlier in the interaction. Elaboration, on the other hand, is treated as a relevant response when the YND requests confirmation of a belief or understanding that has not been addressed. Finally, we will show that YNDs can be oriented to different types of elaboration and that this is made recognizable, at least partly, by their turn design and sequential position. Our analysis is focused on Dutch, but we will suggest in our discussion that English has similar practices.

Questions in Dutch

Lee's (2015) and Park's (2012) findings are in line with Englert's (2010) for Dutch, a language that is structurally very similar to English. In typical Dutch declarative clauses the subject is clause-initial and immediately followed by the finite verb. Unlike English, however, inversion of subject and verb is in Dutch an insufficient condition for a clause to be considered a yes/no-type interrogative. A clause is considered a yes/no-type interrogative when (a) the subject follows the finite verb and (b) the finite verb is clause-initial. Dutch has these two conditions because in declarative clauses other constituents than the subject can be clause-initial. For example, a clause such as *Morgen ga ik werken* (lit. "Tomorrow go I work"/"I go to work tomorrow") is still a declarative even though the subject *ik* follows the finite verb *ga*.

As an example consider Excerpt 1, where Jane responds with just a confirming *ja* to Lisa's turn in line 1. Note that although the subject in Lisa's utterance, *het* ("it"), is not clause-initial, her utterance is in fact considered to be declarative because the adverb *dan* ("then") precedes the finite verb *zou* ("should").

[Excerpt 1—GR2-03:40.6-04:10.2] [A]

01 Lis → *dus dan zou het begin augustus een keer kunnen;*
 so then should it start August a time could
 so then it would be possible at the beginning of August;
 02 (1.0)
 03 Jan JA
 yeah
 04 (0.4)
 05 Lis ja
 yeah

Lisa and Jane have been trying to make arrangements to get together during the summer, but this has proven difficult as each is on vacation when the other is available. Lisa offers a suggestion in line 1, speculating that they could get together at the start of August. By using the conjunction *dus* ("so") and the adverb *dan* ("then"), she shows that her suggestion is based on prior talk, and in this way she

¹All pauses, except the ones in Excerpt 3, were computer timed. This means that they are measured as slightly longer when compared to conventional counting techniques in which a counting phrase such as *one Mississippi, two Mississippi* is used (Kendrick & Torreira, 2015).

claims relative certainty that August is indeed a viable option. The final-falling intonation of her turn is also frequently associated with indexing certainty (see Couper-Kuhlen, 2012). Yet Jane has primary rights to talk about when she is going to be available (Heritage, 2012, 2013; Heritage & Raymond, 2005). Both participants orient to this epistemic status by treating confirmation as the relevant next action: Jane by providing the confirmation particle *ja*² and Lisa by acknowledging it and treating it as expected, also with *ja*.

Englert (2010) reports two main action types that are associated with what she calls *declarative questions* in Dutch: confirmation requests and initiation of repair. Surveying a corpus of Dutch informal telephone conversation, however, we found that there are plenty of cases in Dutch where declaratives receive a more elaborate response than just confirmation. And on occasion, when elaboration is not forthcoming, speakers will pursue it, showing that the elaboration is noticeably absent.

Data and method

The corpus used in this study consists of a little over 10.5 hours of spontaneous interaction in Dutch. These are 103 separate conversations: 97 audiotaped telephone conversations and six videotaped face-to-face conversations (the excerpts are marked respectively with [A] and [V]). The number of participants in the videotaped conversations ranges from two to seven, and all conversations are between family members and/or friends. All participants signed informed consent forms, allowing use of the data for research purposes. The data have accordingly been anonymized, meaning that all proper names used in this article are pseudonyms. The conversations have been transcribed according to the conventions of Jefferson (Atkinson & Heritage, 1984).

From these conversations we selected all requests for confirmation that had declarative word order, so-called *yes/no declaratives* (YNDs) (G. Raymond, 2010a). These are declarative utterances that address information that falls in the addressee's epistemic domain and therefore project confirmation, typically in the form of a yes/no-type response particle (Labov, 1970).

As our focus was on the type of response that was made conditionally relevant, we excluded all sequences where the addressee did not conform to the constraints set in the YND (see Hayano, 2012)—for example, by providing a transformative response (Stivers & Hayashi, 2010). We thus only considered YNDs that received a type-conforming response (G. Raymond, 2003). Furthermore, we also excluded all sequences that contained a dispreferred response, as these are by their dispreferred nature accountable and thus frequently receive some form of elaboration, even when it has not been made relevant by the YND. The final collection that was used for the analysis in this article consists of 125 YNDs that receive a type-conforming, preferred response.

These 125 sequences were first split up into two collections based on the response that was provided. One collection contained all responses that consisted of only a yes/no-type particle, the second collection contained all other responses. We then considered the action that was implemented with these more elaborate responses and found that 30 responses were primarily used to do confirming: In these 30 cases, the additional TCUs consisted of such things as epistemic modifiers (e.g., *geloof ik*/'I believe'), vocatives (e.g., *jongen*/'man'), or (partial) repeats of the first pair part (see Stivers, 2005). Because these responses were designed to do just confirming, we added these 30 cases to the first collection. The resulting collection of cases where the response was designed to only confirm consisted of 66 cases; the collection of cases where the response contained some form of elaboration consisted of 59 cases.

Finally, we analyzed the turn-final intonation of each YND to see if there was a relation between the turn-final pitch movement and action. As can be seen from the results in Table 1, the type of

²The rather lengthy gap of 1.0 seconds might be a result of Jane checking her diary whether she is indeed available early August.

Table 1. Frequency of Response Types in Relation to the Turn-Final Intonation of the YND.

Response Type	Turn-Final Intonation of YND (First Pair-Part)						Total
	Rising		Flat		Falling		
Confirmation	13	(20%)	5	(8%)	48	(73%)	66
Confirmation+	11	(19%)	5	(8%)	43	(73%)	59

response—(a) confirmation or (b) confirmation plus elaboration, what we call *confirmation+*—does not depend on whether the turn-final intonation of the sequence-initiating YND was rising, flat, or falling.³ While this is not to say that prosody plays no role in our data, at least turn-final pitch does not seem to be an a priori relevant factor in distinguishing between YNDs that make relevant only confirmation and YNDs that also project elaboration. Instead, prosody likely plays a role at the level of individual activities (Couper-Kuhlen, 2012).

We will first discuss the first set of cases where responses were used to implement confirmation. To keep the contrast clear, we will discuss cases where confirmation was done with only a yes/no-type particle. We will argue that YNDs that make relevant these minimal confirming responses are done in specific sequential positions where they typically address information that has already been interactionally established or is highly salient based on the prior talk. We will then show that YNDs that project elaboration are done in different sequential positions and convey a prior belief, i.e., claim epistemic access to a domain of the interlocutor to which the speaker has not been given access in the conversation so far (Turner, 2012).

YNDs that get a simple yes/no response

In this section we will discuss some examples of YNDs where confirmation is treated as an adequate next action. We selected cases where confirmation is implemented with only a yes/no-type particle, so it is done with the most minimal linguistic means available. In each case the addressed information clearly falls within the epistemic domain of the addressee (Heritage, 2012; Stivers & Rossano, 2010), and the information of which confirmation is requested has already been interactionally established or can be easily inferred from the prior talk. The speaker can thus be held accountable for claiming a shallow epistemic gradient (Heritage, 2010; Stivers, Mondada, & Steensig, 2011). The requests for confirmation in this section are thus instances of prototypical YNDs (G. Raymond, 2010a). That does not, however, mean that all actions are completely identical. We will distinguish between two types of requests for confirmation based on the sequential environment in which they are produced: in the closing section of the conversation or at the end of a larger sequence.

In the following excerpt the YND is produced when the participants are recognizably moving toward closure of the conversation (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973). The excerpt also serves as an example of a prototypical sequence initiated by a YND: Confirmation simply by means of a polar response particle is treated as the relevant next action. The YND (in lines 5 and 6) formulates an agreement that was made a few minutes earlier in the conversation (data not shown), and the speaker uses specific lexical items to show that she holds the information to be true and that she bases her knowledge on prior talk. The excerpt is from the end of a telephone conversation in which Loes has called Karel, her boyfriend. Earlier in the conversation, Loes had asked whether Karel could come over on Friday for her mother's birthday. He had, however, already made plans to play soccer with his friends. Because he had to come on Saturday anyway, they agreed that he will sleep at her place on Friday.

³Earlier research argued that participants distinguish between declarative assertions and questions in Dutch using only the turn-final pitch movement (Haan, 2002). It should be clear, however, from Table 1 that Dutch has no turn-final *questioning intonation* (Seuren et al., 2015; Walker, 2014).

[Excerpt 2—BM1/446/459] [A]

01 Loe: •hh hEE maar ik zie je ʔmorgen
 •hh hEY but I'll see you tomorrow
 02 we houden effe contact?
 we'll keep in touch?
 03 (0.7)
 04 Kar: ʔja. (.) °pr[ima°.]
 yeah. (.) °f[ine°.]
 05 Loe: → [wan]t e::h
 [becau]se e::h
 06 → dan kom je ʔdus naɖat je met de jongens bent geweest.
 then come you thus after you with the guys have gone
 then you'll come after you've been out with the guys.
 07 (0.7)
 08 Kar: ʔj:a.
 y:eah.
 09 (0.2)
 10 Loe: oké gezellig=
 okay neat=
 11 =•h geef ik ʔdat [ook effe] door aan me ouders;
 =•h I'll pass that [also] along to my parents;
 12 Kar: [()]
 [()]
 13 (1.0)
 14 Kar: ʔoke:. leu:k.
 oka:y. nea:t.

Loes articulates their plans to meet the next day and proposes that they keep in touch in lines 1–2, with which Karel agrees.⁴ They thereby collaboratively move toward closure of the conversation (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973). In this conversation-closing sequence, Loes uses a YND in line 5–6 requesting Karel to confirm that he will come over after he has gone out with the guys—i.e., on Friday after he has played soccer. Karel only provides a confirming response particle *ja*, which Loes accepts as an adequate next action both with her sequence-closing third in line 10 and by saying that she will provide that information to her parents.

Loes designs her YND in line 5–6 to show that she is in a relatively knowing position. She prefaces the turn with *dan* (“then”), which in this case does not have a temporal but a summative function. Furthermore, she uses the adverb *dus* (“thus”), which, while frequently used to mark some understanding as inferred from prior talk (see Heritage & Watson, 1979), is used here more generally to treat the formulated agreement as mutually known. Furthermore, Loes’s turn has a final falling pitch contour, which, at least here in the case of a yes/no-type inquiry, also seems to index that Loes is relatively certain (Couper-Kuhlen, 2012). These turn constructional features are in line with the sequential placement of the YND: Loes requests confirmation after she and Karel have already discussed and agreed on the formulated plan. She is not adding anything new to the interaction but simply requesting confirmation on their earlier agreement. Confirming is thus all that Karel needs to do. The declarative syntax, the various lexical items, the final falling intonation, and the minimal response all show an orientation by both interactants to a shallow epistemic gradient.

In the following two excerpts (3 and 4) we see two more examples of confirmation requests where a yes/no-type particle is treated as an adequate response. In both cases the YND is designed as a reformulation of a request for information or itemized news inquiry (Button & Casey, 1985) that was implemented earlier with a yes/no-type interrogative. The speaker is thus recognizably returning to

⁴Loes implements her proposal also with declarative word order, and Karel’s response consists of more than a yes/no-type particle. However, the action implemented with the YND is a *remote request*: Karel’s turn is in fact a minimal way of committing to a remote request (Houtkoop-Steenstra, 1985; Lindström, 2017).

the start of the sequence or topic (Schegloff, 2007, p. 184). Both YNDs are thus produced in different sequential environments from the one in Excerpt 2: the YNDs in Excerpts 3 and 4 are done as part of an ongoing sequence, whereas the YND in Excerpt 2 returns to an already closed sequence.

Excerpt 3 is from a telephone conversation between a mother and son. The son is enrolled in a boarding school, and they have discussed some mundane aspects of life, such as his homework. The YND we are interested in here is in line 29. Directly preceding Excerpt 3 Jan has asked when he can come aboard his parents' boat, and Jan closes that topic with a sequence-closing third in line 1. In line 2 the mother then uses interrogative syntax to ask whether Jan was on time for the train the day prior to the conversation. The mother treats the following—affirmative—answer as requiring some elaboration by responding with *jah* (“yeah”) with a slight rising pitch and asking whether the distance to the station was not very far (both in line 5). After a brief discussion of the distance to the station, the mother in line 29 readdresses the issue of whether Jan was on time but this time with declarative instead of interrogative syntax. In line 30 Jan responds to this question with a simple type-conforming answer (*j:a:h*).

[Excerpt 3—HMSC/294/328] [A]

01 Jan: okay.=
 okay
02 Mot: =was je op tijd gistere voor de trein:?
 =were you on time yesterday for the train:?
03 (0.6)
04 Jan: e:h: ja::h. >°jajah.°=
 e:h: yea::h. >°yeahyeah.°=
05 Mot: =jjah was 't nie zo ve:r:
 =yyeah it wasn't that fa:r:
06 (0.4)
07 Jan: neu:: 'k geloof dat het dertig
 no. I think it was about thirty
08 kilometer ↓was. °↓f<toch nog wel.
 kilometers. °↓f<yet still
09 (.)
10 Mot: t↓och ↓nog:
 y↑et ↓still
.. [15 lines omitted]
26 Mot: ja↑:
 yeah
27 (0.3)
28 Jan: (jah)°↓ja
 (yeah) °↓yeah
29 Mot: → maar je was in ieder geval wel ↓°op tijd.
 but you were in any case ADV on time
 but you were on time at least.
30 Jan: j:a:h
 y:ea:h
31 (.)
32 Mot: oké.
 okay.
33 (0.2)
34 Jan: jah?
 yeah?
35 Mot: nouh, verder heb ik geen bijzonder(s).
 well, I've got nothing else remarkable to tell.

The mother's YND in line 29 is recognizably designed as a return to her sequence-initiating action from line 2. Not only does the YND address the same issue—whether Jan was on time for the train—but it recycles most of its lexical design (see Schegloff, 2007, 2011). Furthermore,

As in the previous excerpt, the YND is designed as a return to the start of the topic, changing the syntax from interrogative to declarative. And here too the YND gets a minimal type-conforming response that is followed by a sequence-closing third (*hmm*, in line 9), after which topic transition is possible. After a 1.0 s lapse (line 10–12) Brian provides a general assessment about the weather *over there* that does not develop the topic beyond anything that was already said by Stewie, and it is only minimally acknowledged.

But while Bonnie's YND also constitutes a move toward sequence closure, it does so in a different way from the mother's YND in the previous excerpt. Bonnie prefaces her YND with *dus* ("so") and thereby shows that she is formulating the prior talk (Heritage & Watson, 1979) and continuing an ongoing sequence. Compare this with the mother's YND that was prefaced with *maar* to signal resumption of an abandoned sequence. Bonnie also assesses Stewie's vacation from his own perspective: He and his parents must have enjoyed the vacation. Such a summary assessment has been shown to be closure-implicative (Drew & Holt, 1998; Jefferson, 1984), and this is indeed the way Stewie treats this particular turn: He only produces a minimal response.

So the means in Excerpts 3 and 4 are different: Jan's mother uses *maar* to show that she was resuming an abandoned sequence, whereas Bonnie uses *dus* to show that she is providing a summary assessment of the immediate prior talk. The goal of both YNDs, however, is the same: Bonnie's YND is the first pair-part of a sequence-closing sequence, just like the mother's YND. Both return to the start of the sequence, using declarative syntax instead of interrogative to address the same issue, and both treat confirmation by means of a yes/no-type particle as the relevant next action. These YNDs thus share a set of distinct features and constitute a specific practice for requesting confirmation.

In this section, we discussed three examples of YNDs that only get a confirming, type-conforming response. The analysis presented here is in line with Lee's (2015) finding that because a declarative encodes a shallow epistemic gradient, a knowing position, it requests only confirmation. But there is more to the story apart from encoding of an epistemic stance: They all return to an earlier part of the conversation—either a sequence that has already been closed as in Excerpt 2 or the start of the same topic or sequence as in Excerpts 3 and 4. And it is precisely because these YNDs readdress a prior turn that they request only confirmation. In this way the speaker also behaves in line with his/her epistemic responsibilities (Stivers et al., 2011), which we will demonstrate further in the next section, by showing that YNDs that do not readdress a prior turn make relevant more than confirmation, or at least actively create an opportunity for the recipient to provide additional talk.

YNDs that elicit more than confirmation

In the previous section we discussed YNDs that made relevant only confirmation as a next action. We argued that this is not just because these YNDs index a shallow epistemic gradient (Lee, 2015; Park, 2012) but also because they were also designed to recognizably return to a prior action (Schegloff, 2007). In this section we will show YNDs that elicit more than confirmation. By *elicit* we mean that the speaker has not requested this elaboration in a way that makes him/her accountable for having done so (Sidnell, 2017). This is similar to how a *my-side telling* seeks an account without requesting one (Pomerantz, 1980) or how demonstrating a problem is not asking for help but can be a step toward recruitment (Kendrick & Drew, 2016).

The YNDs in this section bear some similarities to the cases we discussed in the previous section: They address recipient-oriented events, index a knowing stance, and make relevant confirmation. There are, however, crucial differences: (a) in each case the speaker addresses a recipient-oriented event that has not been discussed in the conversation so far and cannot be inferred from the preceding talk, and so (b) the YNDs in this section are not designed as a return to a prior action. In fact, as we will show, they frequently launch entire new sequences, although this is certainly not true for all cases.

In line 4 Francine introduces Aspen, a large nightclub, by saying that she went out (*uitgeweest*).⁸ That Francine went out is treated as news by Hayley in line 6: She repeats part of Francine's prior turn prefaced with *oh* (Maynard, 1997). In her subsequent turn, which is the turn we are interested in, she checks whether Francine went to the Singel, which Francine confirms. Francine elaborates briefly by explaining that she left at half past 10. Hayley then challenges Francine's use of the term *uitgaan*, which to her means does not mean leaving at 10:30; that's too early.

Both from the sequential position in which Hayley produces her YND in line 6 and from its design, it becomes clear that she is seeking more than just confirmation. She responds to Francine's telling by formulating specifically what she did not know, treating a part of Francine's telling as news, which Francine has not designed as such: Francine has been listing clubs, but Hayley calls attention to Francine having gone out. So she has already displayed that she might be interested in more than just confirmation. Hayley's following TCU should be understood in relation to this: She checks whether Francine went to the Singel, having just learned that she went out. By using both the particle *toch* and the conjunction *maar* ("but") she shows that she considers the two incompatible: With *toch* she treats Francine attending the homecoming as a prior belief—she did display this belief earlier in the talk—that has somehow been challenged (Foolen, 1994), and with *maar* she projects that her TCU in line 7 is contrastive. Hayley thus treats Francine's prior turn as somehow contradicting her prior belief, and this provides Francine with the opportunity, and possibly even the obligation, to rectify the situation. In the very next turn Francine complies by not just confirming but also providing an explanation for how she could do both.

The problem, as it turns out, is what it means to *go out*. After Francine has confirmed that she went to the homecoming and explained that she left Aspen at half past 10, Hayley states that she would not call that—i.e., "leaving at half past 10"—going out.

Like the cases we discussed in the previous section, Hayley's use of a YND conveys her commitment to the belief she formulates: She takes a relatively knowing stance. But she is not just looking for confirmation of something she already suspects. Hayley has not designed her turn as a return to a prior action but to convey that a prior belief has been challenged by the prior talk and in this way she seeks more than confirmation: She requests an explanation for the perceived contradiction between the news that Francine provides and her own prior beliefs.

The following case also shows a speaker who uses a YND to claim epistemic access to a recipient's domain but does not return to a prior action. And here too the speaker elicits more than confirmation: in this case an account. In Excerpt 8, Wendy and Melanie are on the phone. They have been talking about Wendy's upcoming exams and a trip they are planning to take together. Wendy closes the latter topic in line 1 with a sequence-closing *oké*. She then says that there was something else she wanted to ask in line 2, demonstrating that she considers the prior topic finished and that there is room for topic transition. After failing to remember in line 5, she initiates a new topic in line 7 by mentioning that Melanie is not coming home the next weekend using a YND. Melanie confirms with a type-conforming *nee*, and after a 0.5 s pause, continues with an account for why she is not coming home the following weekend.

⁸The precise meaning of *uitgaan* depends on the context. It is frequently used in a way similar to *clubbing* in English, where it means frequenting more than one club, although it could also mean visiting a single club. And Francine, in fact, seems to use it for the specific nightclub she went to, Aspen. Its vagueness actually is the source of Hayley's problem, as can be seen in her turn in line 11.

[Excerpt 6—BN1/162/176] [A]

01 Wen: #oké::h#.=
 #oka::h.=

02 =en wat wilde ik nou ook alweer nog meer? (.) vragen?
 =and what else did I want to? (.) ask?

03 e::hm,
 e::hm,

04 (1.9)

05 °↓ah (.) ik weet het niet meer.°
 °↓ah (.) I can't remember.°

06 (0.9)

07 → maar je komt dus dit weekend niet thuis;
 but you come so this weekend not home
 but so you're not coming home this weekend;

08 (0.8)

09 Mel: nee:.
 no:.

10 (0.5)

11 nee ik heb e::h een borrel met allemaal oud
 no I'm having e::h drinks with a bunch of former

12 huisgenootjes,
 housemates.

13 (0.2)

14 Wen: °ja°
 °yeah°

15 Mel: en ik moet zondag gewoon ↓hockeye:n,
 and I have to play hockey on sunday.

16 (0.5)

17 Wen: °oh[ja.°]
 °oh[right.°]

18 Mel: [°dus°] (0.2) e::hm >ja dat is een beetje onhandig<
 [°so°] (0.2) e::hm >yeah that's a bit inconvenient<

19 om heen en weer te gaan=
 to go back and forth=

Wendy and Melanie have not discussed Melanie's plans for the weekend in this specific conversation. Nonetheless, Wendy uses *dus* ("so") in the design of her YND, with which she treats it as previously mentioned or talked about that Melanie is not coming home. Crucially, she claims in this way that while Melanie's plans for the weekend may fall in Melanie's epistemic domain, it is a domain to which Wendy also has access. She shows that she knows—i.e., she does knowing—when her claim of epistemic access has not been licensed in the prior talk (see Turner, 2012). By doing so in an environment that is topic-shift implicative, Wendy elicits more than just a type-conforming *nee*. But not just any type of elaboration will suffice. Notice that Wendy formulates a negative action, something Melanie is *not* going to do. This is similar to what Schegloff (1988, p. 120) calls "a noticing of a negative event." Schegloff, however, discussed noticings where the speaker had visible access, and this is not one such case: Wendy formulates an event that is not going to happen. But the practice still works in a similar way: Wendy formulates behavior that is in some way deviant from what can be expected—although not necessarily a *failure*: Wendy later says that without Melanie she'll be able to study better (data not shown)—thereby eliciting an account for that behavior. So both the sequential position of Wendy's YND and its design project that Melanie should do more than confirm.

The initial response by Diane in line 8 is slightly delayed, possibly because she had already provided confirmation in line 6, but she subsequently does more than confirm: She provides an assessment in line 10 and says that she has no appropriate clothes (lines 11–17). How Diane confirms in line 8 projects that she is going to produce more than just the response particle: She says *ja* in a laughing way and follows with a laughter token (*hu*) and a loud in-breath. It is thus clear from her confirmation that she takes Susan's YND not just as a request for confirmation but as an invitation to tell, i.e., as a topic proffer. Although her initial uptake in line 8 provides only confirmation, its design still shows that Diane embraces the topic and thus does a preferred next action (see Schegloff, 2007).

Unlike Excerpts 5 and 6, there seems to be nothing in the turn design of Susan's YND that makes it recognizable as projecting more than just confirmation. She simply formulates something Diane is going to do, treating it as known with the YND and as previously talked about with *dus*. In other words, she simply claims knowledge about a recipient-oriented event. But this is precisely how topic proffers work: Susan offers a topic to Diane without actively launching or developing it by (a) addressing a recipient-oriented event after a prior topic has been closed, (b) formulating what she already claims to know, and (c) not returning to a prior action (Schegloff, 2007, p. 170; see also Button & Casey, 1985). The function of a topic proffer, at least when implemented with a YND, is thus primarily grounded in its sequential placement.

Although topic proffers do not necessarily request elaboration through linguistic means, participants do orient to these YNDs as projecting more than confirmation. Consider the following excerpt where the topic is not taken up by the recipient. In the subsequent talk both participants show through their actions that confirmation alone was not what the speaker was after: Some form of elaboration is pursued and resisted and thus treated as noticeably absent.

Prior to the data shown, there is an extensive sequence in which Marie has been complaining about a project she has to do, a complaint Anne treats as unjustified. After some discussion, Marie says that it is generally not fun to have to do things when you do not support them, broadening her complaint beyond her specific situation. This seems to constitute a move toward topical closure (see Drew & Holt, 1998). Anne minimally confirms in line 1, and Marie herself only produces a *maar ja* ("but yeah"), showing that she is not going to develop her complaint any further.

[Excerpt 8—DK2/75/92] [A]

01 Ann: ja
 (.)
02 Mar: maar ja: •hhh [()]
 but yeah: •hhh [()]
03 Ann: [na:h] das waa:r.=
 [(we:ll)] that's true:.=
04 → =en eh †morgen heb je met jan †klaas nog je afspraak?
 and tomorrow have you with Jan Klaas still your date
 =and eh tomorrow you have your date with Jan Klaas?
05 (0.4)
06 Mar: >jA<
 >yEAH<
07 (1.7)
08 Ann: o:ké; [j]A is ook gezellig=
 o:kay: [y]eah is also fun.=
09 Mar: [(ja)]
 [(yeah)]
10 >j_a ja ja<
 >y_{eah} yeah yeah<

- 11 [d]a- da- dat weet ik niet,
[t]ha- tha- that I do not know,
- 12 Ann: [ja]
[yeah]
- 13 Mar: dat zie ik we:l; ghuhu
I'll see; ghuhu
- 14 (0.2)
- 15 Mar?: •h
- 16 (0.3)
- 17 Ann: nou ja ↑goed
well yeah good
- 18 dat zou gezellig kunnen zi[jn.
that possibly could be f[un
- 19 Mar: [het
[it
- 20 [zou gezellig kunnen wo]rden ja.
[possibly could become fu]n yeah.
- 21 Ann: [°(< >)°]
- 22 Mar: ghuhaha[ha
- 23 Ann: [°ja°
[°yeah°
- 24 (.)
- 25 Mar: •H #ja#. •H nee.
•H #yeah#. •H no.

First note that the YND in line 3 is produced in a sequential environment similar to the one in Excerpts 6 and 7. In lines 1–3, both Marie and Anne produce turns that do not expand the preceding sequence and instead move toward closure (Schegloff, 2007). At that point, Anne produces a YND (line 4) to which Marie responds in line 6 with a simple confirmation (*ja*). In the subsequent talk, however, Anne shows that she was in fact looking for more than confirmation. First there is a 1.7-second silence after Marie's initial response. By not continuing her turn, Marie shows her orientation that Anne should speak next, whereas Anne, by keeping silent, shows her orientation that it is in fact Marie who should continue. When no elaboration is forthcoming, Anne provides what could be interpreted as a sequence-closing third: an *oké* with an assessment. But the design of her assessment does not constitute a closing move: (a) The *oké* and the assessment each have their own intonation contour, (b) the assessment is prefaced by the polar response particle *ja*, and (c) the assessment is almost fully clausal instead of consisting of just the relevant adjective (compare with Loes's *oké gezellig* in line 3 of Excerpt 2). Rather than moving toward sequence closure, Anne's turn provides the terms along which Marie can provide further talk: She does another attempt at launching the topic, treating Marie's minimal confirmation as a dispreferred response, as resisting the proffered topic. Marie also treats Anne's assessment as a second try, but her uptake is again dispreferred. With her multiple saying she *actively* resists the line of inquiry that Anne continues with her assessment (Stivers, 2004). Furthermore by refusing to commit to the assessment in lines 11 and 13, she demonstrates her unwillingness to talk on the matter. Despite all this, Anne again probes for elaboration in line 17–18, but Marie resists yet again. After this third failed attempt at getting Marie to talk about her planned date, both move toward sequence closure.

Notice that Anne attempts to establish a new topic in a very specific environment: not just following possible sequence closure, but following a troubles-telling. As was noted by Jefferson (1984), participants have a hard time keeping a conversation going after a troubles-telling and thus frequently move into closings. But Jefferson also noted that one way to keep the conversation alive is

for the recipient of the troubles-telling, in this case Anne, to recognizably launch a new, other-attentive topic. And this is precisely what Anne does and a potentially positive topic for Marie to boot.

Here we clearly see that Anne's YND in line 3 was done as a topic proffer but one that is not embraced by Marie (see Schegloff, 2007). By responding with just the response particle *ja*, i.e., by designing her turn to be minimal, Marie demonstrates her unwillingness to produce more talk on the topic (Button & Casey, 1985; Schegloff, 2007). Furthermore, by producing a very short *ja*, Marie might actually show that she is not going to produce more talk in an environment in which more talk is relevant (G. Raymond, 2010b).

In Excerpts 6, 7, and 8, a YND is produced in a position where topic transition is relevant. That is, if the prior topic stays closed, the participants will either have to move to a new topic or toward conversational closure (see Button & Casey, 1988). By producing a YND that does not return to a prior action but instead recognizably launches a new sequence by addressing a new issue, the speaker invites the cointeractant to not just confirm but to provide more talk. In case of Excerpt 6, this additional talk should take the form of an account, which is made recognizable through the design of the YND, whereas in Excerpts 7 and 8, the recipient simply has to demonstrate a willingness to talk on the topic by doing what Schegloff (2007, p. 171) calls an *expanded response*. In these two cases the YNDs function as a topic proffer.

In this section we have argued that participants use declarative utterances in which they claim access to a domain of the recipient to do more than request confirmation: They seek elaboration. The difference between the YNDs in this and the previous section is not in their morphosyntactic design. Instead, while the YNDs in the previous section were all designed to recognizably return to a prior action and formulated some inference or upshot of the prior talk, the YNDs in this section addressed beliefs or understandings that, while also recipient-related, had not yet been discussed in the prior talk.

Because their morphosyntactic design does not differ from YNDs that request only confirmation, we would not wish to argue that these YNDs *request* elaboration, i.e., that the recipient has a normative obligation for providing elaboration and can be sanctioned for not doing so. For example, simply because in Excerpt 7 Diane provides more than confirmation, the elaboration was not necessarily requested. Moreover, as was also argued by Schegloff (2007) and Button and Casey (1985), and as have we shown again in Excerpt 8: Resistance to a topic proffer is done through a confirmation, i.e., by providing what seems like the preferred next action. But as we also showed: In such cases participants can and do treat elaboration as noticeably absent. So instead of recognizably requesting elaboration, these recipient-oriented YNDs create an environment in which the recipient can volunteer additional talk, meaning that the speaker is not accountable for requesting that elaboration, and neither is the recipient accountable when s/he does not provide it (Sidnell, 2017).

The question is then, why do participants not make their action recognizable as requesting elaboration through the turn design? That is, why do participants create an environment in which elaboration is relevant, but it is made to look like it is volunteered instead of requested? For example in Excerpt 8, Anne could have asked if Marie is looking forward to her date if that is what she is interested in. One possibility is that these YNDs address delicate topics and that a YND is the prime way to request elaboration without accountably doing so. This was particularly clear in Excerpt 8 where Anne and Marie had to move out of a troubles-telling, and similarly asking for accounts and explanations could very well be delicate actions. Such an analysis would also be in line with some my-side tellings discussed by Pomerantz (1980) and Schegloff's (1988) noticing where a speaker formulates some behavior by the recipient s/he observed and is thus claiming access to the recipient's experiences that has in no way been licensed by the recipient. There are cases like Excerpt 7, however, where it is not clear why the topic, in this case running, would be delicate to the participants. Clearly further work is still required.

Discussion

Earlier work on declarative yes/no-type initiating actions (YNDs), or declarative questions in more vernacular terms, has argued that they make relevant only confirmation and that they do so because of the epistemic stance they index: A declarative is used to convey confidence in the formulated belief or understanding (Lee, 2015; Park, 2012; G. Raymond, 2003, 2010a). In Dutch, however, confirmation is not always enough. Focusing only on YNDs that receive a type-conforming (G. Raymond, 2003), preferred response, we found that almost half of 125 YNDs in our corpus get some form of elaboration. In fact, in some cases where elaboration is not provided as a next action, it is treated as noticeably absent and pursued.

To explain these findings, we have investigated the differences between YNDs that receive only confirmation and those that receive a more elaborate response. While these two types of YNDs cannot be distinguished based on their morphosyntactic design, they do differ in both their sequential placement and epistemic context.

YNDs that implement simple requests for confirmation formulate a belief or understanding that has already been discussed and established (Excerpts 2, 3, and 4) or is at least highly salient (Excerpt 1). When launching a sequence-closing sequence, for example, we find that they recognizably return to the action with which the sequence or topic was launched by recycling large parts of its turn design but change the syntax from interrogative to declarative (see Schegloff, 2007). This recycling is in fact what makes these YNDs so suitable for launching a sequence-closing sequence. By returning to the start of the topic or sequence and claiming a knowing position, the speaker conveys that that initial action—e.g., a news inquiry (Button & Casey, 1985)—has been adequately addressed. Further elaboration of the topic is therefore no longer needed, and confirmation is a way for the recipient to go along with this closing move.

YNDs that seek more than confirmation on the other hand formulate a belief or understanding that has neither been addressed nor made salient in the prior talk. In other words, the speaker formulates a recipient-oriented prior belief or understanding and thereby claims access to a domain of the recipient when that access has not been licenced in the ongoing interaction (see Turner, 2012). The type of elaboration that a speaker elicits varies, and in the case of topic proffers no specific elaboration is even being sought: The primary aim of a topic proffer is to establish a topic of talk, and the recipient simply has to display a willingness to talk on whatever topic has been proffered. But embracing a topic means doing more than confirming. In fact, as was demonstrated by Button and Casey (1985), itemized news inquiries that simply offer a recipient-oriented topic can elicit the telling of news. And so while the primary task of topic proffers may be different from YNDs that elicit a specific type of elaboration, they still need to be dealt with through some expanded response.

We have shown in this article that when YNDs request confirmation, they can also create an opportunity for the recipient to provide some form of elaboration, and in fact, when that elaboration is not provided it can be pursued. Furthermore, we have shown two ways in which participants distinguish between YNDs that request only confirmation and YNDs that also elicit some form of elaboration. First, confirmation is treated as adequate when a speaker recognizably returns to a prior action and thus formulates a belief or understanding that has already been established or made highly salient in the prior talk. Elaboration is sought when speakers address a prior recipient-oriented belief that has not been locally addressed. Second, confirmation-oriented YNDs are produced and create different sequential environments. They recognizably return to a prior, sequence-initiating action, thereby projecting sequence closure. Elaboration-oriented YNDs, on the other hand, set up a contrast with prior talk, or come in a position where topic transition is relevant, after closure of a prior sequence and topic.

Conclusion

Our analysis has shown that although participants do orient to the relatively knowing epistemic stance indexed with declarative yes/no-type initiating actions (Heritage, 2012; Lee, 2015; Park, 2012; Raymond, 2003, 2010a), the response recipients provide can only partly be accounted for with the epistemic stance

alone. Based on these findings, we have suggested, following Sidnell (2017), a direction in which the action-formation problem (Schegloff, 2007) can be further explored. Accountability is at the heart of this line of research. Participants have various means of achieving an interactional goal. In some cases, possibly most cases, they pursue these goals in a way that makes them accountable for having done so, but sometimes they are more circumspect. How and why participants manage to avoid accountability is a question that bears further investigation. Achieving some interactional outcome without the risk of being held accountable for pursuing that outcome is not just reserved to politicians: It is useful for and applied by all participants in talk-in-interaction.

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